DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 285 486 HE 020 628

AUTHOR King, Lovern Root
TITLE Cultural Diversity: New Directions for Education.
PUB DATE Feb 86
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Western Meeting of the National Social Science Association (Seattle, WA, February 13-16, 1986).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Role; Cultural Awareness; Cultural Differences; *Cultural Education; *Cultural Pluralism; *Educational Objectives; Ethnic Groups; Ethnic Relations; Higher Education; Immigrants; *Intercultural Programs; Intergroup Relations; *Minority Groups; *Multicultural Education; Social Sciences; Sociocultural Patterns

ABSTRACT

Perspectives concerning cultural diversity and the schools are presented. It is suggested that educational preparation is needed in the United States for the social, political, and economic realities brought about by the growth in both immigration and births among native minority groups. Schools should be aware of students' cultural diversity and such factors as the influence of family values and the community. Research suggests that the following factors have been found to be critical to successful completion of college: dealing with racism, positive self-image, realistic self-appraisal, preference for long-range goals, availability of a strong support person, successful leadership experience, and demonstrated community service. To promote cultural diversity, emphasis should be placed on: the meaning and nature of groups, how images of groups develop, different group perspectives of reality, and the value and possibility of cross-cultural communication. It is suggested that social science courses should address diversity of language, race, culture, and religion. Mention is made of efforts by member states of the Council of Europe to coordinate educational systems that can balance cultural assimilation and preservation of cultural roots. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Cultural Diversity: New Directions for Education

ED285486

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Lovern Root King

The Evergreen State College

Olympia, Washington

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Lovern Root King
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Immigrant populations equal to a city the size of Seattle poured into the United States during the 1984 fiscal year. These were legally admitted immigrants. Unofficial estimates place illegal immigration at double or triple this figure. The 544,000 legal immigrants entered the United States primarily from Third World countries. In fact, two-thirds of all the immigration in the world consists of people entering the United States. There are more that 1.3 million students whose primary language is not English in U.S. schools and who are enrolled in federal, state or local study programs that provide instruction in their native tongues.

These people are experiencing the pressures of assimilation much as our ancestors did yet our educational policies to meet this influx of cultural diversity continue to be fragmented and fail to acknowledge and utilize cultural differences. It is estimated that by the year 2000, of the six billion people that will inhabit the earth, five billion will be people of color. More than half of the U.S. population growth by that time will come from "minority" groups. There is a great danger of ignoring the enrichment of this culturally diverse population and negating fundamental bases of identity. What is needed now then is educational preparation for the social, political, and economic realities that individuals will

HE 020 628

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

experience in human encounters that are culturally diverse and complex. Our cultural richness must not be lost but must be strengthened. Too often educational planning has been done only when an issue reaches critical proportions. Unfortunately, the knowledge dispensed in most of our colleges is too rigid to keep pace with the rapidly changing face of the world. Ways must be found to integrate the two. There must be the establishment of objectives and policies that will enable educational planners to be actors rather than reactors in the upcoming crisis in U.S. education (and society) caused by this great isurgence of immigrants and the continued high birthrate among native minority populations.

At one time, education was locked carefully within monastic walls and in sole control of the church. Those bonds were shattered when the printing press placed books within the reach of all. Schools then became the keepers of the secrets to reading and to possessing knowledge. All children were herded into the confines of educational institutions and educators looked on themselves as the guardians and sometime facilitators of learning.

Unfortunately many of us, as educators, still act as though we had a monopoly on learning and our educational planning reflects this. We act as though learning processes are switched off once students leave the sacred confines of the college cloisters. Such things as family values and interactions, community activities and mass media input are generally ignored. We no longer have the luxury of operating within this fantasy world.

Consideration must be given to the socio-educational aspects of students. This is especially true as it involves cultural diversity. Recognition must be given of the 'significant differences' in all of us. For minority groups this involves identity, community involvement and personal authority. Robert Bailey in his book **Minority Admissions** identified the following variables as the most important predictors of success by minority students:

1. positive self-image
2. understands and deals with racism
3. realistic self-appraisal
4. prefers long-range goals to short-term or immediated needs
5. availability of a strong support person
6. successful leadership experience
7. demonstrated community service

These factors were more critical to the successful completion of college by minority students than high school grade point average or SAT scores. It is important to see the significance of these culturally related variables in relationship to the actualization of potential within minority students. To negate their identity and community ties effectively negates their successful completion of college.

Regretably, program funding, employment opportunities, and political pressures have too often in the past created destructive competition between special interest groups. Rather than look upon the commonality of concerns, these groups have expended energy and focus on conflicts among themselves. A proliferation of special programs have been emphasized at different times. The semantics of titles becomes overwhelming and

diversionary---multicultural education, cultural pluralism, ethnic studies, cultural literacy, bilingual/bicultural education, cross-cultural communication, global education. What is really needed is to establish the respect for and recognition of 'significant differences', whether this be racial, ethnic, age gender, sexual preference, economic level, lifestyle, physical abilities or whatever. If this attitudinal change can be effected, legislation, appropriate curriculum, sensitive faculty and other needed corrective measures will develop naturally, not by mandate.

Carlos Cortes in his article "Multiethnic and Global Education: Partners for the Eighties?" (**Phi Delta Kappan**, April 1983) points out four common goals upon which proponents of cultural diversity could coordinate efforts. These goals are:

1. the meaning and nature of groups
2. how images of groups develop
3. different group perspectives of reality
4. the value and possibility of cross-cultural communication

Also worthy of consideration are the recommendations of the "attainable global perspective" articulated by Robert Hanvey (**Theory into Practice**, Summer 1982):

1. <u>Perspective consciousness</u> -an awareness or recognition that the perspective held by an individual is not necessarily the perspective held universally throughout the world.
2. <u>"State of the Planet" awareness</u> - understanding prevailing world conditions and developments (e.g. population growth, migrations, economic conditions, resource and physical environment, political developments, science and technology, law, health, inter-nation and intra-nation conflicts).

3. Cross-cultural awareness - addresses the diversity of ideas and practices among peoples throughout the world and how they compare/ contrast with one's own culture.

4. Knowledge of group dynamics - expands upon Cortes' goals to emphasize the themes and concepts of world systems.

5. Awareness of human choices - the recognition of the concept of choice as it applies to individuals and nations.

These goals and perspectives fit nicely within the context of social science study as well. They could, of course, be included in cognitive components of social science courses but the affective domains should be addressed also through intercultural student exchanges or travel, using community people and cultural activities as resources, the recognition and inclusion of 'significant differences' and experiences within the students of the college classes, and the discussion of potentially explosive issues of imbalance of power that exist between nations and among groups within nations.

The populations of the United States consist of a diverse heritage of cultures. Everyone, except possibly the Native Americans, was originally from immigrant stock. Rather than negate this resource, we should capitalize upon and utilize it. This is to our advantage. If we are to prepare students for the culturally diverse world of the future, they must encounter diversity of language, race, culture and religion within their educational experience. The social sciences are an ideal area in which this can happen.

The younger students within our current college classes have grown up during a time of massive media input and little personal political involvement. Increasingly conservative attitudes and perspectives pervade their responses and approaches to education. For them, the repulsiveness of the Vietnam War and social welfare ideals of the Kennedy Era are ancient history that do not relate to their life. The blandness of network television has permeated our lives until even our college classrooms fear dealing with topics of conflict. In too many incidents we still teach subjects as if Western Civilization (and more particularly United States perspectives) were all that exist. We perpetuate the ethnocentric knowledge we received in our own educations. The extra work to research additional information for a more global/cultural viewpoint seem overwhelming. And yet, this is what must be done. Ideally, a national dissemination center of culturally diverse materials available for on-line computer access would be the most efficient mode. Given our present lack of federal funding and support in higher education, especially as it pertains to cultural issues, this prospect does not seem likely in the near future. However, there does exist the possibility of networking between various groups concerned with cultural issues. The National Social Science Consortium is one such area in which networking can happen. Again, however, our thinking and actions must expand beyond even this paradigm of thinking.

The author is currently at work researching the educational policies utilized in the Council of Europe member states for the education of the children of migrant ("guest") workers. The purpose of this research is to investigate work done by the Council of Europe in the field of

intercultural education for its applicability to minority education in the United States and to focus on COE networking models in intercultural education.

The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 to study and coordinate national policies on a host of social problems in Western Europe, including the education of children of foreign workers. From 1945 until the mid-seventies, almost 30 million people entered the Western european countries as workers or workers' dependents. Some returned to their countries of origin but many stayed. the population of Western Europe increased by about 10 million between 1950 and 1975 as a result of net migration. Labor migration was the largest factor in the development of immigrant populations, now amounting to over 16 million. Those that Western European countries originally thought would be 'guest' workers have stayed on and now the schools are filled with their "children of the second generation", most of whom have been born in the host country but still retain identity with the country of their parents' origin. The Council of Europe has 21 member states: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. These member states have taken specific steps to coordinate educational systems that can balance assimilation and preservation of cultural roots. The very diverse cultural backgrounds and national policies of Council of Europe member states have not hindered them from cooperative planning in intercultural education. They have developed models of international collaboration with strict rules insuring, as far as possible, work in partnership (or at

least with common aims) while at the same time preserving each partners' specific identity. In the face of increasing minority populations in the United States, both native born and immigrants, this is an effort from which we may learn new approaches. Educational planning must address the issues of the increasing numbers of minority populations, effective utilization of decreasing funds for minority education, and the necessity for all students to receive an education that will prepare them to live in a culturally diverse world.